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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to design a peer counseling program for Davidson County Community College. Implementation of such a program will provide more services for each student at a low cost, will provide leadership/work experience for students at the college, and will enable professional counselors to devote more of their time to the counseling function rather than to the guidance function. The primary function of the peer counselor is to perform those duties that do not require professional credentials, such as information-giving, study techniques, and class scheduling assistance. In the literature review, the author details the functions of paraprofessionals, the functions of the counselor, and the advantages of utilizing paraprofessionals. After describing the peer counseling programs at two other North Carolina community colleges, the author presents a method for gaining administrator support and approval, plans for selecting and training peer counselors, a proposed list of peer counselor functions, and a method of evaluating the peer counseling program. A short bibliography is appended. (DC)

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A CASE FOR PEER COUNSELING

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by

Delores A. Parker

Presented to:

Dr. B. Lamar Johnson
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JC 760 350

Restrictions imposed by current financial limitations have forced college administrators to reexamine every phase of college operations. The urgent requirement seems to be to enlarge, revise, or reduce college activities and services, as appropriate, to obtain the greatest return on investment.

Davidson County Community College in seeking to provide effective student personnel services for each of its students must constantly seek ways of improving these services at the lowest cost. The overall purpose of this paper is to design an innovation - peer counseling - for students at Davidson County Community College. The rationale for implementing peer counseling at Davidson County Community College is based on four factors:

1. To provide more services for each student.
2. To adjust to present budget restrictions.
3. To provide leadership/work experience for students at the College.
4. To enable the counselors, to devote more of their time to the counseling function rather than the guidance function.

Peer counseling involves the use of students as assistants, paraprofessionals or technicans in a student personnel department under the supervision of professional counselors. The primary function of the peer counselor is to perform those duties which do not require professional credentials such as general information giving, study techiques, class scheduling and occupational information.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Important terms used in this paper are defined as follows:

1. Student Personnel Worker - refers to members of a student personnel department. Student personnel workers include counselors, deans, directors of admissions, financial aid officers and registrars.

2. Guidance Services - include those services of appraisal, information, counseling, placement, and follow-up as well as other pupil personnel services such as research and evaluation, attendance services, social work services, and reading services (Kroth, 1973).

3. Counseling function - a process which takes place in a one-to-one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he cannot cope alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties (Smith, 1955).

4. Paraprofessional - (Peer Counselor) implies a noncredentialed person who serves on a voluntary and/or paid basis and performs tasks directly related to the guidance program which might otherwise be performed by the professional counseling staff. This type of paraprofessional might also sometimes be known as guidance technician, counselor assistant, guidance aide adviser, etc. This does not include persons employed primarily as secretaries or clerks and assigned to the guidance staff (Blaker, 1971).

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Paraprofessional Defined

The American Personnel and Guidance Association Professional Preparation and Standards Committee (1967) identifies a new group of personnel positons in the counseling center as auxiliary, technical, non-professional, paraprofessional, or support personnel.

Goldman (1967) identifies the "guidance technician" as a person who:

> . . . works under the immediate daily supervision of a guidance counselor, performing only tasks which are explicitly assigned or prescribed. He does not engage in individual counseling, parental interviews, or consultation with teachers (except perhaps to obtain specific information about pupils).
>
> Essentially the technician deals with information: its collections, collation and transmission. In every case he is guided by established policy and procedures or by specific directions from the guidance counselor (p.49).

Shertzer and Stone (1968) used the term subprofessional in describing persons variously referred to as aides, supporting personnel or technicians.

Carson identifies the terms paraprofessional or differential staffing in refering to support personnel in the counseling center.

Functions of Paraprofessionals

The American Personnel and Guidance Association Professional Preparation and Standards Committee (1967) identified the following functions of the paraprofessional:

Direct Helping Relationships

1. Individual Interviewing Function:

   a. Secure information from an interviewee by means of a semi-structured or structured interview scheduled. The information elicited would tend to be factual and limited in nature.

   b. Give information prepared in advance and approved by the counselor for its appropriateness for the interviewee, such information would usually be factual rather than interpretative.

   c. Explain in practical lay terms the purposes and procedures involved in the services to the counselor.

   d. Engage the counselee in informal, casual discussion as a means of putting him at ease and establishing

an openness to counseling. Such dyadic activity may be especially important when performed by an interviewer who is making initial contact with potential counselees who are hostile toward, or apprehensive of counseling.

2. Small-Group Interviewing or Discussion Function:

   a. In structured groups with a largely pre-planned program, guide discussions as a discussion leader.

   b. Describe staff and material available to the group, as an information resource person, or tell the group how and where to acquire needed resources.

   c. Act as recorder in a variety of small-group discussions or counseling situations, under the supervision of the counselor.

   d. Observe verbal and nonverbal interaction in groups, following predetermined cues and procedures for making observations.

   e. Participate in informal, superficial social conversation in a small group of counselees to help put them at ease and to establish the beginning of helping relationships that may be provided by forthcoming counseling.

   f. Informally provide information and support to former outreach activities.

Indirect Helping Relationships

1. Information Gathering and Processing Function:

   a. Administer, score, and profile routine standardized tests and other appraisal instruments (nonclinical type).

   b. Obtain and maintain routine information on the scope and character of the world of work with current reference to employment trends, in accordance with instructions established by the counselor.

   c. Contact various sources for needed records and related information relevant to counseling.

   d. Search for new sources of information about counselees and/or the environment, under direction of the counselor.

   e. Prepare educational, occupational and personal-social information for visual-auditory verbal and graphic

presentation or transmittal to others for use, in accordance with instructions established by the counselor.

f. Under the counselor's supervision. search for new sources to which the counselee may be referred.

g. Secure specific special information about former counselees upon request and under the supervision of the counselor.

h. Operate technical communications media involving printed and electronic processes of a visual-auditory nature or the counselee's benefit.

2. Referral Function:

a. Initiate contact for specific referral agencies.

b. Initiate contact for specific individuals with given referral agencies.

c. Aid individuals in making proper contact with referral agencies.

3. Placement and Routine Follow-up Function:

a. Through appropriate channels, establish and maintain working relationships with organized placement agencies in the community.

b. Develop specific placement opportunities (under the supervision of the counselor) for the individual cases not handled through cooperation with other placement agencies.

c. Maintain continuous surveys of placement conditions and trends as requested by the counselor.

d. Search for new placement resources that may be useful to counselees.

e. Secure follow-up information of a routine nature according to a general follow-up plan.

4. Program Planning and Management Function:

a. Perform routine collecting and analytical statistical operations as a research assistant.

b. Procure and prepare supplies of materials of various sorts for the counselor.

c. Prepare standardized reports of contacts with counselees, potential counselees, referral, placement and follow-up agencies and persons.

d. Maintain appropriate personnel and information records for the counselor.

e. Supervise and coordinate the activities of clerical or other skilled personnel under the general supervision of the counselor.

Goldman (1967) identified the following functions that the paraprofessional would perform:

1. Assists pupils to locate reference materials about occupations and about schools and colleges. The counselor prescribes the areas to be covered and the goals to be accomplished; he usually suggests types of materials which are best suited for the individual or groups, but the technician is expected to exercise some judgement in this regard.

2. Places on cumulative and other records significant information such as test scores, teacher ratings and anecdotal reports, and health reports.

3. Conducts individual and group orientation conferences with incoming pupils. Informs pupils of school curricula offerings, extra curricular opportunities, study methods, and other aspects of adjustment and development in the school.

4. Assists pupils with the more routine aspects of scheduling.

5. Carries out routine statistical work in compiling data pertaining to pupils such as test score distributions, occupational and educational preferences and socio-economic status. He may prepare local norms and experience tables.

6. Carries out prescribed activities in connection with studies such as surveys of referral possibilities in the community: follow-up studies of the school's graduates and dropouts.

7. Conducts the more routine group guidance activities, and those concerned primarily with information. Examples are preparation for choice of future school or colleges, information about military service options, information about occupational status and trends, and suggestions about study methods.

8. Maintain an up-to-date collection of information materials concerning educational and opportunities.

9. Administers paper and pencil tests in groups and individually, as directed by the guidance counselor. Scores tests and records results.

10. In the absence of the counselor, or when the later is busy, may handle emergency situations on a first-aid basis (pp. 49-50).

Functions of the Counselor

The American Personnel and Guidance Association Professional Preparation and Standards Committee (1967) stated that the functions of the professional counselor differ from those of the paraprofessional in the following ways:

1. The counselor performs the counseling function described in the professional policy statements, while support personnel may perform important and necessary activities that contribute to the overall service.

2. The work of the counselor involves synthesis and intergration of interrelated parts of the total range of services with, and in behalf of, the counselee. The work of support personnel tends toward the particular and becomes an integral part of the larger whole only as this is developed under the leadership of the counselor.

3. The counselor bases his performance on the use of relevant theory, authoritative knowledge of effective procedures, and evaluation of the total endeavor. Functions of support personnel are characterized by more limited theoretical background and specialization in one or more support functions (p. 89).

Advantages of Utlizing Paraprofessionals

The American Personnel and Guidance Association Committee (1967) emphasized the following advantages of utilizing paraprofessionals in counseling centers:

> It is the position of the Association that appropriately prepared support personnel under the supervision of the

> counselor, can contribute to meeting counselees' needs by enhancing the work of the counselor. The appropriate use of such personnel will facilitate the work of the counselor and make the total endeavor more effective.

Carson (1973) related the following four advantages of using differential staffing/paraprofessionals:

1. Maximum use of professional training and experience.
2. Higher morals among professional staff.
3. More effective use of all personnel.
4. Economy of operation through reduced salary costs for the total staff (pp. 329-330).

Field and Thompson (1973) identifeid the following advantages of using paraprofessionals:

1. The need of the professional staff to be relieved of a variety of routine responsibilities which do not require their particular level of training.
2. The paraprofessional represents a considerable savings over the hiring of additional staff.
3. To assume an outreach endeavors with the primary objective being to go to the students, listen to them, try to understand their problems and concerns, and refer students to appropriate centers of assistance (p. 176).

Shertzer and Stone (1968) identified two reasons for implementing the use of paraprofessionals:

1. The magnitude of the shortage of professional counselors.
2. The increasing demand for higher standards (longer period of training) in counselor education (p. 130).

PROGRAMS IN THE NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Central Piedmont Community College

The following information explains in depth the peer counseling program at Central Piedmont Community College.

Position Title: Student Counselor (Peer Counselor)

Job Description:

The duties and responsibilities of the Student Counselor will be to represent the College in an extended relationship with individual students to help them make successful adjustments to college life and to Central Piedmont Community College. First, the Student Counselor will have to help the student understand and clarify basic differences between high school and college academic life. Secondly, this person must help the counselee achieve personal adjustments to this campus so that he will be able to make maximum use of resources available to him here. Also the Student Counselor should provide opportunity for the counselees to participate in activities which will lead to an improved self-concept and self-image. In addition, the helping student will lead activities and discussions designed to promote the counselees development of his values and goals especially realistic educational goals. In order to accomplish these objectives the Student Counselor:

1. Should enjoy working with people and have a genuine concern for their welfare.

2. Should know and be able to explain College regulations and procedures of concern to students; registration procedures, change of program procedures graduation requirements, etc.

3. Should be familiar with and be able to explain all College services available to students and be able to refer and assist students, if necessary, in obtaining these services: e.g., Student Employment Office, Student Loan and/or Financial Aid, Tutorial Assistance Program, Departmental Faculty Advising, Professional Counseling on-campus, career planning, etc.

4. Should be thoroughly familiar with and be able to suggest and demonstrate study skills to counselees; e.g., reading, testbooks, taking notes, preparation for and taking of tests.

5. Should be able to explain and demonstrate budgeting time and self-management.

6. Should be able to lead group discussion and activities in which students become award of their positive potential and an appreciation of their unique assets and abilities.

7. Should be able to lead group discussion and activities in order to assist students in clarifying personal values and goals -- especially educational goals which are both realistic and enriching.

8. Should be able to keep legible, accurate records of his work according to directions provided for him.

Western Piedmont Community College

Peer counselors at Western Piedmont Community College perform the following duties:

1. Conduct student orientation.

2. Assist students with registration.

3. Assist counselors with group counseling activities at local penal institutions.

4. Provide tutoring services.

5. Assist the counselor with counseling services.

RELEVANCE OF PEER COUNSELING TO DAVIDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The proposed peer counseling program is relevant to Davidson County Community College for the following reasons:

1. The continuous increase in student enrollment during the last few years.

2. The desire to meet the needs of a diverfied student population- evening students, minority students, returning women students, and veterans.

3. Professional counselors need more time to perform counseling functions.

PLAN FOR LAUNCHING PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM

Dean of Student Services

The review of the related literature aforementioned, will serve as a guide to gain support for the proposed program from the Dean of Student Services. A projected itemized cost sheet will be presented to the Dean, and a concerted effort will be made to illustrate to him how the proposed program will save him money when the need arises to hire professional counselors. It must be reiterated frequently that by saving money he will not sacrifice effective services for his students.

The Dean will be encouraged to make suggestions as well as alterations to the proposed program.

Student Personnel Workers

Input and support from student personnel workers will be solicited and used. A special effort must be made to prevent student personnel workers from feeling threatened by the use of peer counselors.

Administrators and Teaching Faculty

The proposed program needs support from others outside of the student services center, therefore, administrators and teaching faculty will be briefed about the program during the planning and developmental stages.

Selection of Peer Counselors

Students selected for the peer counseling program should meet the following criteria:

1. Should be interested in people and relate well to them.

2. Should have had previous leadership experience - high school, church, community clubs, or Davidson County Community College.

3. Completed at least one quarter of academic course work at Davidson County Community College with a minimum grade point average of 2.0.

4. Evaluations from at least two faculty members at Davidson County community college.

5. Must take two study habit related tests.

6. Evaluations by peers at Davidson County Community College.

7. Complete at least one personality appraisal questionnaire.

Methods of Training Peer Counselors

1. Internship - students selected for the peer counseling program will serve one quarter as an intern in the counseling center.

2. Workshops - students will be expected to attend workshops set-up by the counseling center to train them.

3. Role Playing - this technique will be use to help peer counselors gain experience in helping to solve some of problem of students.

4. Groups - peer counselors will be exposed to group techniques. Some of their duties will include leading group discussions.

5. Self-Awareness Unit

An integral part of peer counseling training should be a unit on Self-Awareness which is to help the student to understand himself better and to help him to develop a more positive self-concept. It should be a part of peer counseling because if a student does not accept or "feel good" about himself, he cannot relate harmoniously and effectively with others.

By awareness it is meant, the degree of clarity with which a student perceives and understands all of the factors that affect his life. Self-Awareness in the traditional sense is usually a self-evaluation

to determine assets and limitations. In peer counsel'ng this holds true also, but with added emphasis on relationships within groups and with individuals.

Self-Awareness is a person's actual feelings about himself. Everyone's basic need is to "feel good" about himself, mentally physically, and emotionally. This need is responsible for the student's ultimate motivation. All his goals, hopes and aspirations are based on this fundamental need. Only through sound self-awareness can be eliminate the debilitating and disastrous sense of inadequacy and emotional turmoil that can keep him from functioning in a harmonious and effective manner.

In a unit on Self-Awareness the student is confronted with the following questions: Who and what am I? What makes me the way I am? What is my purpose in life? What do I want to be? What goals can I achieve? Is my self-concept, unnecessarily, limiting my achievement?

Proposed Functions of Peer Counselors

1. Conduct individual and group orientation conferences with new students.
2. Assists students to locate reference material about occupations and about schools and colleges.
3. Conducts the more routine guidance activities, and those concerned primarily with information.
4. Assists students with the more routine aspects of scheduling.
5. Assists students with study techniques - taking notes, preparation for and taking of tests, and budgeting of time.
6. Administer tests, score tests, plot test profiles, and record information about students.
7. Conducts intake interviews and isolate facts which might later be brought to the attention of the counselor.

8. Maintains an up-to-date file of information materials concerning educational and occupational opportunities.

9. Assists students in the interpretation of college rules and procedures, such as registration procedures, change of program procedures, and graduation requirements.

10. Assists students in making contact with referral agencies.

Number of Peer Counselors

The number of peer counselors to be utilized will be determined by determined by student personnel workers at Davidson County Community College.

COST

The Peer Counseling Program will be funded from the student services budget. This will obviate the need to hire additional professional counselors. The program should save both the department and the college several thousands of dollars. Peer counselors will be paid at least the mininum wage.

EVALUATION

Initially, the evaluation of the peer counseling program will follow very closely the evaluation procedures used by Brown (1972) at Southwest Texas University. He used three criteria in evaluating his student-to-student counseling program: tests scores, course grades and questionnaire responses. Precounseling and postcounseling scores on three standardized tests were used - the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, the Effective Study Test, and the Study Skills Survey. The tests were used "to evaluate the student academic counselor's effectiveness

in teaching efficient study skills and in communicating positive academic attitudes." The point-hour grade-ratio and the quality-point total were used in order to assess the program's influence upon academic performance. "The point-hour ratio was computed by assigning number values of 4,3,2,1, and 0 to grades A,B,C,D, and F respectively; multiplying each value by its corresponding number of credit hours; and obtaining the weighted average for all courses carried by the student. The quality-point total was completed exactly like the point-hour ratio except that the student's point-hour values were summed instead of averaged."

The courselee's acceptance of the program was determined through anonymous responses to a sixty-item Counseling Evaluation Questionnaire and a ten-item Sentence completion Survey. These scales were designed to assess the counselee's perception of four aspects of the counseling process: "(a) counselor behavior, (b) material covered, (c) counseling climate, and (d) results achieved."

The Counseling Evaluation Questionnaire provided a five-choice continuum for the counselee to rate the extent of his agreement or disagreement with each of the statements. "Twenty statements are positively worded, in that agreement indicates a positive reaction toward the counseling: forty statements are negatively worded, agreement indicating a negative reaction toward the counseling." The questionnaire contained four fifteen-item scales, with each scale having a possible score range of -30 to +30, inclusive (p. 103).

Methodology

1. "Two samples of 108 students containing 54 males and 54 females, were selected from the 731 freshman entering Southwest Texas University."

2. "Students in the control sample were individually matched on the following eight variables with those in the experimental sample: chronological age, sex, high school quarter rank, high school size, scholastic ability score, study orientation score, residency, and employment status."

3. "Students in the experimental sample received academic adjustment counseling from student academic counselors; students in the control sample were not given such academic counseling."

4. "Six student academic counselors, three males and three females, were selected from the 731 freshman entering Southwest Texas University in the fall of 1959."

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